

Pittsfield School District

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The School Board is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its students and school community. This policy supports federal, state, and local efforts to provide education on youth suicide awareness and prevention; to establish methods of prevention, intervention, and response to suicide or suicide attempt (“postvention”); and to promote access to suicide awareness, prevention, and postvention resources.

A. District Suicide Prevention Plan and Biennial Review.

No later than May 31, 2020, the superintendent shall develop and provide to the Board for approval, a coordinated, written district suicide plan (the “plan”) to include guidelines, protocols, and procedures with the objectives of prevention, risk assessment, intervention, and response to youth suicides and suicide attempts.

1. Specific Requirements for Plan Terms.

The district suicide prevention plan shall include terms related to:

- a. Suicide prevention (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, referrals);
- b. Response to in- or out-of-school student suicides or suicide attempts (postvention, suicide contagion);
- c. Student education regarding safe and healthy choices, coping strategies, recognition of risk factors, and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide, as well as help seeking strategies;
- d. Training of staff, designated volunteers, and contracted personnel on the issues of youth suicide risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, post-intervention, and resources available within the school and community;
- e. Confidentiality considerations;
- f. Designation of any personnel, in addition to the dean of operations as district suicide prevention coordinator, to act as points of contact when students are believed to be at an elevated risk of suicide;
- g. Information regarding state and community resources for referral, crisis intervention, and other related information;

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- h. Dissemination of the plan or information about the plan to students, parents, faculty, staff, and school volunteers;
 - i. Promotion of cooperative efforts between the district and its schools and community suicide prevention program personnel;
 - j. Such other provisions deemed appropriate to meet the objectives of this policy (e.g., student handbook language, reporting processes, postvention strategies, memorial parameters, etc.).
2. Biennial Review.

No less than once every two years, the superintendent, in consultation with the district suicide prevention coordinator, with input and evidence from community health or suicide prevention organizations, and district health and guidance personnel, shall update the district suicide prevention plan and present the same to the Board for review. Such plan updates shall be submitted to the Board in time for appropriate budget consideration.

B. Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Liaisons.

1. District Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

The dean of operations who, under the direction of the superintendent, shall be responsible for:

- a. Developing and maintaining cooperative relationships with and coordination efforts between the district and community suicide prevention programs and personnel;
- b. Annual updating of state and community crisis or intervention referral intervention information and names and contact information of building suicide prevention liaisons for inclusion in student handbooks and on the district's website;
- c. Developing or assisting individual teachers with the development of age appropriate student educational programming, such that all students receive information in the importance of safe and healthy choices and coping strategies, recognizing risk factors and warning signs of mental disorders and suicide in oneself and others, and providing help-seeking strategies for oneself or others, including how to engage school resources and refer friends for help;
- d. Developing or assisting in the development of the annual staff training required under section C of this policy;

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- e. Such other duties as referenced in this policy or as assigned by the superintendent.

2. Building Suicide Prevention Liaisons.

School counselors are designated as the building suicide prevention liaisons and shall serve as the building point-of-contact person when a student is believed to be at an elevated risk for suicide. Employees who have reason to believe that a student is at risk of suicide, or is exhibiting risk factors for suicide, shall report that information to the building liaison, who shall, immediately or as soon as possible, establish and implement a response plan with the district suicide prevention coordinator.

C. Annual Staff Training.

The superintendent shall assure that, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, all school building faculty and staff, designated volunteers, and any other personnel who have regular contact with students, including contracted personnel or third-party employees, receive at least two hours of training in suicide awareness and prevention. Such training may include such matters as youth suicide risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, interventions, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and local resources.

D. Dissemination.

Student handbooks and the district's website will be updated each year with the contact information for the building suicide prevention liaisons, state and community crisis or intervention referral resources. The district suicide plan will be made available on the district's and each school's respective websites.

Adopted: February 20, 2020